



What is MRSA?

Everybody has a variety of germs/bacteria on their skin. About half the adult population carry a bacteria called *Staphylococcus aureus* in their nose or on their skin. There are different types of *Staphylococcus aureus*. It is usually harmless but if it gets inside the body (for example through a cut or scratch) it can cause infections and need treatment with antibiotics.

In some instances, the *Staphylococcus aureus* becomes resistant to commonly used antibiotics (meaning these antibiotics don't work anymore). The name of one of these antibiotics is methicillin and these resistant bacteria are known as Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus or MRSA.

MRSA is not usually a problem for healthy people. People with MRSA on their skin do not look or feel different from anyone else. However, MRSA can cause infections if it gets into the body through broken skin, and this can be a problem for patients in hospital, especially after they have had an operation and have a surgical wound. These infections can be treated with special types of antibiotics.

How is MRSA spread?

In hospitals, MRSA is usually spread to a person through contact with the hands of a person who already has it on their skin. It is not normally spread through the air. You may have acquired MRSA before you came into hospital, or you may have acquired it in hospital.

How can the spread of MRSA in hospitals be prevented?

All hospitals have infection control policies in place to address this. Stopping MRSA spreading between patients in hospital depends on staff, visitors and patients all cleaning their hands well, before and after touching other people.

If a patient in hospital is known to have MRSA either on their skin or causing an infection, special soaps, ointments or antibiotics are sometimes given to try and get rid of the MRSA. The patient may also have a room by themselves, and hospital staff may wear gloves and aprons to reduce the chance of them spreading the MRSA to other patients.

In all Perth public hospitals, names of people who have been found to have MRSA will be recorded on the hospital computer system.

This means that hospital staff can do the extra things mentioned above if you come in to one of these hospitals.

Will medical treatment be different for patients with MRSA?

No, the extra measures taken will not interfere with treatment or care received while in hospital.

What about family and visitors of people with MRSA?

MRSA does not harm healthy people including pregnant women, children and babies. Visitors will be asked to wash their hands after visiting. At home, normal hygiene practices such as washing hands before eating and after using the toilet is advised.

What happens if a person with MRSA needs admission to hospital?

On admission to a public hospital in Perth, the computerised record will let staff know if someone has MRSA. However, if admitted to any hospital outside Perth or a private hospital, hospital staff should be told about this on arrival so that precautions can be put in place if necessary.

Where can I get further information or advice?

Patients and their families should first seek advice from their Doctor and/or Infection Control Nurse at the hospital, or from their General Practitioner.

Information is also available through the Department of Health's website, www.population.health.wa.gov.au.